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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8573
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2007

In Today's Papers

TGS Details Military Operations into Northern Iraq
All papers report that Turkey's military General Staff (TGS) said Tuesday that between 150 and 175 PKK militants were killed in the first Turkish air assault on December 16, which targeted terrorists camps in northern Iraq. TGS said "more than 200 targets were hit, including three command centers, two communications centers, two training camps, 182 living quarters, and 14 arms caches." The TGS said many wounded PKK members went to hospitals in northern Iraqi cities after the air strikes. The TGS emphasized that the targets were PKK installations and not civilians. The military statement said it would continue attacks on the PKK targets in northern Iraq.

Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports that four Turkish F-16 fighter jets bombed PKK targets in the Zap region of northern Iraq early Tuesday. Colonel Hussein Tamar, a Peshmerge commander in the province of Dohuk, was quoted yesterday as saying that "Turkish warplanes bombed villages near the border with Turkey, but that no one was hurt because the area was evacuated earlier this month."

At a party meeting on Monday, Prime Minister Erdogan emphasized that the military operations targeted the PKK and civilians were not harmed. Erdogan noted that Turkey was exercising its right to defend itself "within the framework of international law." Opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal told his party that operations in northern Iraq should continue until the PKK is eliminated. Baykal criticized the ruling AKP for planning an amnesty law, saying it was "too early." The far right MHP leader Devlet Bahceli followed suit, saying the alleged government plan would mean "political amnesty" for the terror organization.

Pro-Kurdish DTP to Form 'Human Chains' on Iraq Border
Mainstream Sabah reports Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP will begin "civilian actions" that call for an end to Turkish military operations into northern Iraq. The DTP will reportedly form "human chains" on the border with Iraq, and has invited both the families

of the PKK victims and the families of security personnel killed by the PKK to join the demonstration. Meanwhile, DTP MP Osman Ozcelik said his party was ready to support a recent proposal from Jalal Talabani, who said the PKK was ready to lay down its arms if a "comprehensive amnesty" was approved by the Turkish government.

Meanwhile, DTP MP Fatma Kurtulan told liberal Radikal there were other politicians in the parliament like her who have relatives in the mountains. Kurtulan caused a heated controversy when it was learned that her husband was a PKK fighter. She claimed one of the AKP cabinet ministers had a cousin who died fighting for the PKK, and that another AKP lawmaker's brother had also died in a clash with the security forces. "I am a product of the Kurdish problem," Kurtulan said, emphasizing her family was just one of the families devastated by the controversies over the Kurdish issue. Kurtulan stressed that problems should be resolved in the parliament.

Papers also report a prosecutor has demanded a three-year prison sentence for DTP deputy Aysel Tugluk for "making PKK propaganda" at a DTP convention in the southeastern city of Batman last year.

President Gul to Meet President Bush Early January
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report President Abdullah Gul will pay an official visit to the United States from January 6-9 at the invitation of President Bush. At a meeting at the White House on January 8, the two leaders will discuss the ongoing cooperation against the PKK, Iraq, the Armenian genocide resolution in the US Congress, the presidential elections in Lebanon, Iran's nuclear program, and energy cooperation between Ankara and Washington, according to papers.

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PKK Member Captured with A-4 Explosives in Istanbul
All papers report Sahabettin Demir, a PKK terrorist who was preparing to carry out a bomb attack on Istanbul subway, was captured with 3.5 kg of A-4 explosives in Istanbul on Monday. The police are pursuing a second suicide bomber who is allegedly preparing to launch an attack in the city. Papers claim the bombers, trained in the PKK camps in the Kandil Mountains, were planning to carry out attacks in retaliation for Turkish air strikes in northern Iraq. Mainstream Milliyet says the terrorist captured by the police in Istanbul is one of the 800 PKK bombers trained for attacks in Turkish cities.

Meanwhile, papers report that since December 9, 47 cars have been set on fire in different cities around Turkey, with the majority of incidents occurring in Istanbul. The Istanbul police have indicated that the arsonists might be Kurdish young men protesting the Turkish air attacks on northern Iraq.

TV News:
NTV

Domestic News

- A percussion bomb placed in a trash can went off Tuesday evening in Istanbul's Kucukcekmece district, injuring seven people.

- Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin said changes in article 301 of the penal code will be submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval within 15 days.

- A Turkish military court has rejected the objections to the arrest of the pro-Kurdish DTP leader Nurettin Demirtas, who faces trial together with 183 other suspects for using falsified health reports to avoid military service. The prosecutor also demands a 10-year prison sentence for Demirtas for his alleged membership in a terror organization.

- The Turkish General Staff (TGS) said in a statement Tuesday that five PKK terrorists, including two women, were killed in security operations on Kupeli Mountain, which is in the southeastern province of Sirnak.

International News

- Prime Minister Erdogan talked to Russian President Putin on the phone so the two leaders could congratulate each other, wish each other a Happy New Year, and exchange views regarding Russian-Turkish relations.
- Northern Cyprus and the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) have signed a new agreement to clear mined areas in the north.
- Two suicide bombings targeting US-backed neighborhood patrols killed 33 people in northern Baghdad, where the US military says al-Qaeda militants are regrouping.
- After his allies won the recent election, ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra said he will return to Thailand as early as February as a "normal citizen," and will stay out of politics.

WILSON